

# Rapid falls in the Death Rate

## SOME FACTS

**I**N A BRIEF article printed in the July 1963 issue of the REVIEW, attention was drawn to some sharp falls in fertility in recent years, such as have occurred in Eastern Europe and in Japan. It is well known that, since the end of the Second World War, some equally sudden reductions have occurred in mortality, over a larger number of countries. It seems worth while to make a note of some of the areas of greatest change and then examine their fertility characteristics. The necessary data are provided by the United Nations *Demographic Year Book*. Here are some examples:

COUNTRY	DEATH RATE PER THOUSAND		
	1945-49	1950-54	1955-59
Reunion	24	18	14
Zanzibar and Pemba	17	12	8
Costa Rica	14	12	10
Martinique	19	13	10
Mexico	18	15	12
West Indies	14	12	10
Bolivia	16	15	9
Venezuela	14	11	10
Brunei	20	16	13
Ceylon	16	12	10
Singapore	12	10	7
Albania	16	14	11
Bulgaria	13	10	9
Hungary	15	11	10
Spain	12	10	9
Fiji	12	10	8

In most of these sixteen areas, fertility has remained without material alteration during the same period, and indeed in some cases it has actually risen—as the following table shows. There have, however, been appreciable recorded falls in Bolivia, Bulgaria and Hungary.

COUNTRY	BIRTH RATE PER THOUSAND		
	1945-49	1950-54	1955-59
Reunion	42	49	47
Zanzibar and Pemba	22	18	19
Costa Rica	45	48	48
Martinique	35	39	40
Mexico	44	45	46
West Indies	34	35	38
Bolivia	40	39	27
Venezuela	39	45	47
Brunei	45	56	54
Ceylon	38	38	37
Singapore	46	46	43
Albania	32	39	42
Bulgaria	25	22	19
Hungary	20	21	18
Spain	22	20	21
Fiji	40	40	40

That in Bolivia is of particular interest, and it apparently occurred between 1952 and 1957. The data are, however, said to be unreliable, and they are certainly not matched by corresponding developments in other South American countries, in some of which fertility has actually risen. So the figures, unfortunately, cannot be accepted. The number of countries in which fertility has fallen, other than those indicated above, is not large; their populations are small, and the extent of the improvement is fairly modest:

COUNTRY	BIRTH RATE PER THOUSAND		
	1945-49	1950-54	1955-59
Puerto Rico	41	37	34
Israel	29	32	28
Denmark	22	18	17
Finland	27	23	20
Malta and Gozo	37	30	27
Sweden	19	16	14